

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources

Application ID: 13AC145216

Program Name: Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- (+) The applicant provides a clear description of the need for national level disaster trained AmeriCorps members and cites current evidence from national sources that justify the applicant's claim about the need.
- (+) The applicant describes the community problems within the focus area of Healthier Ecosystems that the project will be serving on.
- (+) There was persuasive information regarding the lack of educational and employment opportunities for youth, placing them in a disadvantaged position, and the difficulty veterans are experiencing finding employment or in building skills that would allow them to do so.
- (+) The applicant provides a clear description of the roles, responsibilities and activities for the project AmeriCorps members in both Disaster Services and Healthier Ecosystems. They provide detailed information related to the specific activities and link those with the focus area goals.
- (+) The described project impact within the target community, the applicant states that without the AmeriCorps members who are serving as ecosystem educators the impact upon the target community would be that 7500 kids would not experience and learn about environmental stewardship. Further, the applicant describes how the AmeriCorps members are supplementing and supporting existing conservation stations at the various participating placement sites, not replacing them.
- (+) The applicant articulates the specific number of AmeriCorps member slots and distinguishes the type by designated tasks and roles.
- (+) The applicant clearly states the number of MSYs being proposed and the environmental activities in which they will be involved.
- (+) There was persuasive information regarding the impact the Members could have on addressing the other

objectives on the environmental side that simply would not be available with existing DNR employees.

- (+) The applicant describes in great detail the numbers of MSYs and slots requested, roles of AmeriCorps members, costs and where Members will be serving in the community and specific tasks they want to accomplish in Iowa and other states.
- (+) The applicant describes that the organization's Members will provide capacity building, which they would not otherwise be able to achieve with the staff they have now which also will align with the needs of the program design.
- (+) The applicant describes how their current scope of service and the planned activities and interventions are evidenced-informed. The applicant is utilizing an external evaluator and state that they are using data to continuously improve their service and project.
- (+) The applicant describes the anticipated project outcomes for both the first year and the cumulative impact at the end of the three-year grant cycle in terms of the number of individuals served and the anticipated amount of land that will be restored or reconstructed.
- (+) The applicant explains that their project has a national level impact because they will be providing trained AmeriCorps members to serve as Disaster Services volunteers who will assist disaster victims in other states in addition to being able to respond to disaster situations within their own state. The applicant explains that these trained Members will be serving as levee patrols in their state, which has been authorized by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- (+) The applicant provides detailed information to show the severity of the need about disasters such as droughts, fires, floods, etc. in other states across the United States (U.S.) (information cited from the "Face the Facts USA" 2012 report) to support their intentions of helping other states in disaster situations.
- (+) The applicant has identified significant program impacts intended to support the target population in building job skills and a commitment to address the environmental issues after the grant period is over.
- (+) The applicant describes a successful system for monitoring, time, activities, and impacts through the Department of Natural Resources as well as the various collection and monitoring systems at the service sites.
- (+) Since 2008, the applicant has had AmeriCorps members assisting with disaster services and provided numbers to show how many Members have been recruited and have achieved Performance Measure goals.
- (+) Performance Measures and targets are clearly detailed and explained showing the number of MSYs and slots, targeted outputs, outcomes, problems, interventions, and all other performance information the applicant wants to accomplish including the numbers of individuals being helped within the three-year grant period which describes the overall change that the applicant expects.
- (-) The applicant does not fully describe the needs of the target community that are related to the Healthier Ecosystems focus area that they state they will be committing significant project resources to addressing. The applicant does not describe the extent or specific nature of the ecosystem issues in terms of statistical data, rate of

habitat decline or destruction. Further, the applicant does not provide information about the specific needs for invasive plant eradication and/or plant restoration nor the creation of diverse wildlife habitats, which they state they will be committing significant project resources to.

(-) The applicant does not state whether the target community is economically disadvantaged nor do they describe any conditions that would demonstrate economic disadvantage.

(-) There is well documented information from several federal sources referring to the increase in the number and magnitude of disasters which are being experienced nationwide; however, the application was weak on presenting specific information that supports the need for Iowa to establish a disaster response team that could be deployed out of the state for extended periods of time, and which would also be available for other environmental activities.

(-) There is no demographic information or narrative regarding economic disadvantage of the residents located in the various communities in Iowa.

(-) The statistics provided in this section do not fully convey the extent or severity of the need in Iowa in regards to the ecosystem, as well as the reasoning for employing deployable disaster employees to various parts of the country. The statistics describe the rate of natural disaster in Iowa but the project indicates that the AmeriCorps members will be deployed for disaster assistance nationally, not locally.

(-) The application fails to fully describe the needs as they relate to all interventions described in this program, particularly in the interventions aimed at improving Iowa's ecosystem.

(-) The applicant does not illustrate an understanding of the intense training and the time necessary to establish a qualified national disaster response team, which would make them unavailable for almost any other activity.

(-) The applicant does not provide enough evidence that the proposed slot types align with their program design and activities.

(-) The application is evidence-informed and does not rely on specific up-to-date data from recognized sources as support for their selection of the proposed target groups.

(-) The applicant does not sufficiently identify the training requirements essential for a disaster response team qualified to respond to disasters nationwide.